



School Safety Moment

Update 1

September 10, 2012

Anonymous Tip Line FAQs

*Do you need to tell someone in authority about a dangerous school situation? No problem. Call WeTip at **1-800-78-CRIME**.*

One of the school safety features our state enjoys is a way for any public school student to pick up the phone and render totally anonymous tips to trained operators. It is as easy as picking up the telephone and dialing **1-800-78-CRIME**. You can also call its sister number at **1-855-86-BULLY**. Students can offer information to help solve a crime, help prevent one, or notify authorities of a dangerous situation.

As we contemplate the school shootings that have captured America's attention in the news, it is evident we need to effectively use all the tools we have at our disposal to help keep students safe.

Listed below are answers to FAQs regarding Wyoming's provider (WeTip) of this valuable service:

Q1. Has there ever been a breach of anonymity since the non-profit provider started?

A1. No. WeTip started in 1972 and between then and now no caller's identity has been compromised. That is a solid 100 % record and students should feel confident about that.

Q2. If the calls are 100% anonymous, how can WeTip offer rewards for the conviction of a criminal?

A2. One of the questions that is asked of a tipster is “Are you interested in an award in the event of a conviction?” About half of the respondents say yes. In those cases, a three-part code is given to the person and a nearby post office is noted from the call. If there is a conviction as a result of the tip, reward money, up to \$1,000 is sent to that location. The tipster can then go into the post office, offer the three part code received at the time of the tip, and pick up the envelope with the cash – no questions asked.

Q3. How can there be a totally anonymous call? Can't someone trace the line?

A3. We Tip officials have coordinated with the FBI and phone companies so that the lines coming into the office are not traceable. This has been vetted in the courts. Judges have attempted to get names and information from WeTip and were not able to do so. There is simply no recorded or banked information to give.

Q4. The local police department has its own tip line. Shouldn't I just use that line - shouldn't I support my community?

A4. The neat thing about having two different types of tip lines is that the kids that have a great relationship with the police might want to use their line. On the other hand, kids that do not like or trust law enforcement might want to use a tool that is not local. Both lines jointly address a wider spectrum of individuals and problem types than otherwise possible.

Q5. I can't find the right time to make a tip. So what good is it?

A5. Trained and bilingual operators at WeTip are available 24-7 every day of the year. Choose any place and any time, they will be there.

Q6. How many tips have been received in Wyoming?

A6. Over 199 tips have been received since the program was beta tested in Laramie Country School District #1 in 2000.

Q7. Why are you asking me to rat on my friends? That is not what I would consider a fair expectation...

A7. No one is asking you to “rat” on anyone. It is a *virtue* to warn others of danger. If you saw a family member playing with flammable materials near sparks, you would warn them. This is

similar thing. The WeTip line gives a voice to those who otherwise would not have a place to go. The line gives a place for young people to speak out and be safely heard. It also allows law enforcement to keep our communities safer by giving them the tools and information they need.

Q8. Where does the tip go once it is given?

A8. WeTip operators route the tip information to key individuals on a contact sheet belonging to that particular school district (typically a sheriff or school superintendent – it varies from district to district) that same business day. The officials on the contact sheet decide appropriate action from there.

For questions or comments feel free to contact Bruce Hayes, School Safety Consultant at the Wyoming Department of Education, at 307-777-6198 or bruce.hayes@wyo.gov.